

Juveniles Incarcerated in U.S. Adult Jails and Prisons, 2002–2021

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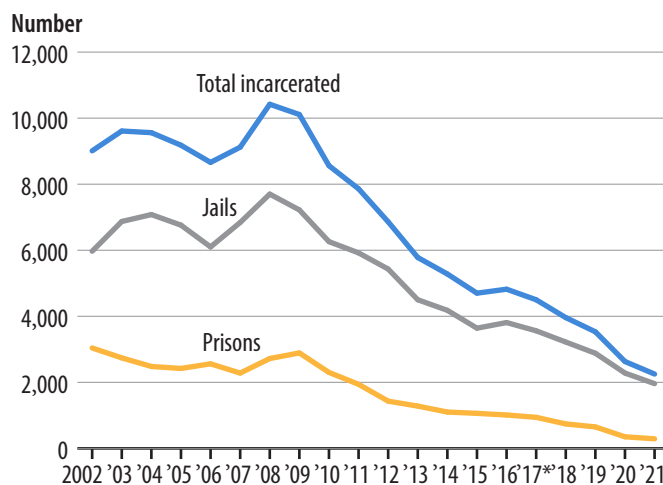
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Juveniles (persons age 17 or younger) arrested or convicted for a criminal offense may be housed in juvenile residential facilities or in adult jails and prisons, depending on state statute, judicial discretion, and federal law. This report details trends for juveniles who are held in adult facilities.

Key Findings

- The number of juveniles incarcerated in all U.S. adult prisons or jails declined from a peak of 10,420 in 2008 to a low of 2,250 in 2021 ([figure 1](#)).
- In 2021, local jails had custody of 1,960 juveniles while state and federal adult prisons held 290.
- The percent of the total jail population who were juveniles declined from 0.9% in 2002 to 0.3% in 2021 ([figure 2](#)).
- The percent of the total prison population who were juveniles declined from 0.2% in 2002 to 0.02% in 2021.
- In 2021, 87% of juveniles in adult correctional facilities were held in local jails and 13% were held in prisons, compared to 66% in local jails and 34% in prisons in 2002, the earliest year for which comparable data are available for both populations ([table 1](#)).

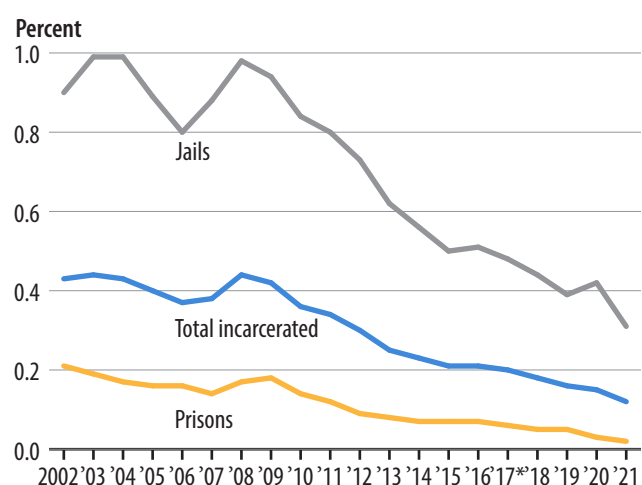
FIGURE 1
Reported number of juveniles held in the custody of adult jails or prisons, 2002–2021



*Prior to 2017, state departments of corrections reported juveniles in their publicly operated facilities only; privately operated facilities were included in state data starting in 2017. The Federal Bureau of Prisons did not report juvenile counts in custody in 2002–2004, 2007, 2008, and 2010. See more details in *Measures of Incarcerated Juveniles*.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, [National Prisoner Statistics](#) program, 2002–2021; [Annual Survey of Jails](#), 2002–2004, 2006–2018, and 2020–2021; and [Census of Jails](#), 2005 and 2019.

FIGURE 2
Juveniles as a percent of the incarcerated populations of adult jails and prisons, 2002–2021



*Prior to 2017, state departments of corrections reported juveniles in their publicly operated facilities only; privately operated facilities were included in state data starting in 2017. The Federal Bureau of Prisons did not report juvenile counts in custody in 2002–2004, 2007, 2008, and 2010. See more details in *Measures of Incarcerated Juveniles*.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, [National Prisoner Statistics](#) program, 2002–2021; [Annual Survey of Jails](#), 2002–2004, 2006–2018, and 2020–2021; and [Census of Jails](#), 2005 and 2019.

TABLE 1
Juveniles in the custody of adult jails and prisons in the United States, 2002–2021

	Total			Juveniles in adult jails			Juveniles in adult prisons				
	Total	Male	Female	Jail total	Male	Female	Prison total	Federal ^a	State ^b	Male	Female
2002	9,010	8,470	540	5,970	5,540	430	3,040	/	3,040	2,930	110
2003	9,610	8,980	630	6,870	6,350	520	2,740	/	2,740	2,630	110
2004	9,560	8,870	690	7,080	6,500	580	2,480	/	2,480	2,370	110
2005	9,180	8,480	700	6,760	6,150	610	2,420	210	2,210	2,330	90
2006	8,660	8,100	560	6,100	5,650	450	2,560	190	2,360	2,450	110
2007	9,120	8,500	620	6,840	6,310	530	2,280	/	2,280	2,190	90
2008	10,420	9,840	590	7,700	7,210	500	2,720	/	2,720	2,630	90
2009	10,110	9,480	630	7,220	6,690	530	2,890	140	2,740	2,790	100
2010	8,560	7,990	560	6,260	5,770	480	2,300	/	2,300	2,220	80
2011	7,860	7,340	520	5,920	5,470	450	1,940	150	1,790	1,870	70
2012	6,860	6,360	500	5,430	4,980	450	1,430	110	1,330	1,380	50
2013	5,780	5,370	400	4,500	4,140	350	1,280	90	1,190	1,230	50
2014	5,280	4,920	370	4,180	3,850	340	1,100	70	1,040	1,070	30
2015 ^c	4,700	4,330	360	3,640	3,310	330	1,060	60	990	1,020	30
2016 ^c	4,820	4,390	420	3,810	3,420	390	1,010	50	960	970	30
2017	4,500	4,180	310	3,560	3,290	270	940	40	890	890	40
2018	3,960	3,610	350	3,220	2,900	320	740	40	700	710	30
2019	3,530	3,290	250	2,880	2,660	230	650	30	630	630	20
2020	2,630	2,480	150	2,280	2,140	140	350	10	340	340	10
2021	2,250	2,080	160	1,960	1,800	150	290	20	270	280	10

Note: Includes persons age 17 or younger. All data are adjusted for nonresponse and rounded to the nearest 10. Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. Results may differ from previous reports due to updates from jail and prison respondents.

/Did not report.

^aThe Federal Bureau of Prisons reported counts of juveniles held in adult contract facilities to BJS in 2005, 2006, 2009, and 2011–2021.

^bPrior to 2017, BJS requested state departments of corrections to report juvenile counts in public facilities only. Starting in 2017, BJS requested juvenile data in both publicly or privately operated correctional facilities.

^cIn 2015 and 2016, the Annual Survey of Jails (ASJ) collected jail population data at midyear and yearend but only collected demographic data on the yearend population. Because jails typically hold fewer inmates at yearend than at midyear, the 2015 and 2016 data reported here were adjusted for seasonal variation and represent estimated midyear counts.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, [National Prisoner Statistics](#) program, 2002–2021; [Annual Survey of Jails](#), 2002–2004, 2006–2018, and 2020–2021; and [Census of Jails](#), 2005 and 2019.

Measures of Incarcerated Juveniles

Data for this report come from local jail authorities, prisons through state departments of corrections (DOCs), and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). Local jail data are based on the jail inmate population confined on the last weekday in June, unless otherwise specified. Prison data are based on persons in the custody of state or federal correctional facilities as of December 31. From 2000 to 2016, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) asked DOCs and the BOP to report the number of persons age 17 or younger in the custody of their publicly operated adult correctional facilities. Starting in 2017, BJS asked DOCs and the BOP to also include persons age 17 or younger housed in privately operated adult correctional facilities contracted to DOCs and the BOP. Historically, the BOP has only held persons age 17 or younger in adult contract facilities, and these counts were reported to BJS in 2005, 2006, 2009, and 2011 to 2021. BOP data were not submitted to BJS for 2002 to 2004, 2007, 2008, and 2010. More information can be found on the BJS website about the [National Prisoners Statistics](#) program, [Annual Survey of Jails](#), and [Census of Jails](#).

APPENDIX TABLE 1

Standard errors for jail data in table 1: Juveniles in the custody of adult jails and prisons in the United States, 2002–2021

	Jail total	Male	Female
2002	186	177	27
2003	379	342	57
2004	188	170	33
2005	~	~	~
2006	148	140	22
2007	166	145	36
2008	170	155	29
2009	195	175	37
2010	226	204	47
2011	175	158	36
2012	245	224	34
2013	207	184	47
2014	168	152	30
2015	121	107	30
2016	154	121	54
2017	128	120	20
2018	131	121	25
2019	~	~	~
2020	93	91	9
2021	69	65	17

~Not applicable. Data represent a complete enumeration based on the Census of Jails.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, [Annual Survey of Jails](#), 2002–2004, 2006–2018, and 2020–2021; and [Census of Jails](#), 2005 and 2019.

APPENDIX TABLE 2**Estimates for figure 2: Juveniles as a percent of the incarcerated populations of adult jails and prisons, 2002–2021**

	Total incarcerated			Jails			Prisons		
	Total population	Juveniles Number	Juveniles Percent	Total population	Juveniles Number	Juveniles Percent	Total population	Juveniles ^a Number	Juveniles ^a Percent
2002	2,105,620	9,010	0.43%	665,480	5,970	0.90%	1,440,140	3,040	0.21%
2003	2,159,900	9,610	0.44	691,300	6,870	0.99	1,468,600	2,740	0.19
2004	2,211,090	9,560	0.43	713,990	7,080	0.99	1,497,100	2,480	0.17
2005	2,286,710	9,180	0.40	760,800	6,760	0.89	1,525,910	2,420	0.16
2006	2,334,490	8,660	0.37	765,820	6,100	0.80	1,568,670	2,560	0.16
2007	2,377,420	9,120	0.38	780,580	6,840	0.88	1,596,840	2,280	0.14
2008	2,393,810	10,420	0.44	785,530	7,700	0.98	1,608,280	2,720	0.17
2009	2,382,920	10,110	0.42	767,430	7,220	0.94	1,615,490	2,890	0.18
2010	2,362,530	8,560	0.36	748,730	6,260	0.84	1,613,800	2,300	0.14
2011	2,334,570	7,860	0.34	735,600	5,920	0.80	1,598,970	1,940	0.12
2012	2,314,920	6,860	0.30	744,520	5,430	0.73	1,570,400	1,430	0.09
2013	2,308,160	5,780	0.25	731,210	4,500	0.62	1,576,950	1,280	0.08
2014	2,306,910	5,280	0.23	744,590	4,180	0.56	1,562,320	1,100	0.07
2015 ^b	2,254,010	4,700	0.21	727,410	3,640	0.50	1,526,600	1,060	0.07
2016 ^b	2,248,800	4,820	0.21	740,670	3,810	0.51	1,508,130	1,010	0.07
2017	2,234,350	4,500	0.20	745,160	3,560	0.48	1,489,190	940	0.06
2018	2,202,830	3,960	0.18	738,440	3,220	0.44	1,464,390	740	0.05
2019	2,164,640	3,530	0.16	734,470	2,880	0.39	1,430,170	650	0.05
2020	1,770,300	2,630	0.15	549,140	2,280	0.42	1,221,160	350	0.03
2021	1,840,660	2,250	0.12	636,340	1,960	0.31	1,204,320	290	0.02

Note: Data are adjusted for nonresponse and rounded to the nearest 10. Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. Results may differ from previous reports due to updates from jail and prison respondents.

^aThe Federal Bureau of Prisons reported counts of juveniles held in adult contract facilities to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in 2005, 2006, 2009, and 2011–2021. Prior to 2017, BJS requested state departments of corrections to report juvenile counts in public facilities only. Starting in 2017, BJS requested juvenile data in both publicly or privately operated correctional facilities.

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for measuring crime, criminal victimization, criminal offenders, victims of crime, correlates of crime, and the operation of criminal and civil justice systems at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels. BJS collects, analyzes, and disseminates reliable statistics on crime and justice systems in the United States, supports improvements to state and local criminal justice information systems, and participates with national and international organizations to develop and recommend national standards for justice statistics. Alexis R. Piquero, PhD, is the director.

This report was written by Zhen Zeng, PhD; E. Ann Carson, PhD; and Rich Kluckow, DSW. Danielle Kaeble verified the report.

Brigit Baron and Maureen Stuart edited the report. Tina Dorsey and Priscilla Fautleroy produced the report.

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